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*Helping People Help the Land...*

**SUBJECT:** Activities Report  
(October 1, 2005 – December 31, 2005)

**DATE:** February 8, 2006

**TO:** Rhode Island Conservation Partnership

## **DISTRICT CONSERVATIONIST REPORT**

### **Eastern Rhode Island Conservation District (ERICD)**

This report was completed by Michael Kenyon, Acting District Conservationist for Eastern District in the months of October, November and December.

In October the staff met with two Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) customers to discuss plan changes and met with client to review remaining practices in EQIP contract, including fence standard, and proposed "equivalent system." Staff also met with two Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) clients on Invasive removal, land clearing, brush management, and early successional habitat management applied this fall.

In November Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) staff continued implementation of two livestock projects. Continued monitoring grassland restoration projects for four sites that are implementing habitat restoration plans. NRCS staff and URI staff collected bird and vegetation data to determine benefits of these projects.

In December staff revised one EQIP project, one conservation plan and received two new potential applicants for farm bill programs.

### **Northern Rhode Island Conservation District (NRICD)**

This report was completed by Michael Merrill, District Conservationist for Northern District in the months of October, November and December.

In October assistance was provided on three AMA projects, three Conservation Security Program (CSP) projects, four Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) projects, 19 EQIP projects, one Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) projects and 11 WHIP projects. NRCS met with clients and updated three CSP contracts. Work was done on six conservation plans for water management systems. Practices included water mains, irrigation water management plans and ponds. Other ongoing work includes surveying pond and fields to complete designs for these agricultural projects. Field staff provided assistance on four livestock projects. Planned practices included heavy use areas, storage structures, erosion control, composting facilities and fencing. Staff provided assistance on several habitat restoration projects. Staff biologist approved six acres of eelgrass restoration that was completed in Narragansett Bay. A client completed installation of an urban flood plain wetland and riparian buffer. State and Field staff held a kickoff meeting with a private engineering consultant and the landowner to begin

design of the Rising Sun Mill fish ladder, this ladder will to provide fish passage through the first dam on the Woonasquatucket River. The District Conservationist reviewed the prior installation of rain garden that was part of a WHIP project.

In November assistance was provided on five AMA projects, one CRP projects, two CSP projects, seven CTA projects, four Drought Assistance Program (DAP) projects, 19 EQIP projects, one GRP project, and nine WHIP projects.

Assistance to agricultural producers included: installation/application of deer fencing, nutrient management and pest management and brush management on two projects. The District Conservationist reviewed contracts with two CSP customers to discuss addition of CSP enhancements for 2006. The field office received seven requests for conservation planning for the CTA Pilot program. Staff provided assistance on five livestock operations for installation of conservation practices including: fencing, waste storage structure, compost facilities, and nutrient management. Completed design for One Access Road. Engineering staff surveyed two other sites so they could begin the design of a compost facility and run off management system. The District Conservationist and field biologist met with DEM Wetlands Division to discuss removing invasive plants from a riparian buffer which is part of a habitat restoration project. Cooperators continued brush management and land clearing on four upland habitat projects the progress on the worked was reviewed by field staff. Staff worked with two TSP's to continue restoration on two upland Habitat projects.

Engineer spot checks were completed as required by NRCS policy. State Conservation engineer reviewed 5% of installed engineering practices.

In December assistance was provided on one CRP projects, three AMA projects, three CSP projects, five CTA projects, four DAP projects, 15 EQIP projects, one GRP projects, two WHIP projects. Field staff continued work on five projects in Northern district through the CTA Program, the work included meeting with clients interested in conservation planning, completing site visits and obtaining additional resource information needed for the planning process. Staff provided assistance to 16 agriculture operators. The assistance included: installing fencing, reviewing nutrient management plans, installing fuel containment system, obstruction removal, brush management and water ways. Additional assistance included reviewing draft designs for three other projects.

### **Southern Rhode Island Conservation District (SRICD)**

This report was completed by Michael Kenyon, District Conservationist for Southern District in the months of October, November and December.

In October assistance was provided on one AMA project, one DAP project, four WHIP projects, two EQIP projects. Staff provided assistance to four agriculture operators. The assistance included irrigation maps for planning irrigation systems, status for pond installation and a scheduled time review to survey for practice design. Worked on four habitat restoration projects which included creation of upland habitat on two projects and reviewing of status on two additional projects.

In November assistance was provided on one AMA project, one DAP project, one GRP project, six EQIP projects, seven WHIP projects. Assistance was provided to seven agriculture operators. Assistance included installing of the following practices: Ponds and fencing.

Surveying was completed for two additional projects to begin engineering design for the projects. Field staff provided assistance on seven habitat restoration projects. This included the following completed practices: Mowing, upland habitat restoration and obstruction removal. Additional work was done by field staff to assist a client with permitting for restoration of a coastal marsh.

In December assistance was provided on one AMA project, two DAP projects, 12 EQIP projects, one GRP project, one CTA project. Field staff worked with 13 agriculture operators. This assistance included revision of nine Conservation plans. Staff met with three other clients to review status of their installation of Conservation practices in their plan.

### **EARTH TEAM VOLUNTEER PROGRAM (ETVP) (Reported by Jeanne Comford)**

During October through December RI NRCS used 26 volunteers, for a total of 270 hours to assist with implement NRCS programs/services.

### **ECOLOGICAL SCIENCES (Reported by Eric Scherer)**

The NRCS Rhode Island Electronic Field Office Technical Guide (eFOTG) was updated during the first Quarter of Fiscal Year 06 with the following changes:

#### **Section III**

The Resource Management Systems (RMSs) for Rhode Island have been archived and in their place the Conservation Guide Sheets (CSGs) have been developed, based upon land use and identified resource concerns. Electronic links have been developed by County to the CSGs being used in the state.

#### **Section IV**

The Rhode Island State Technical Guide Committee has reviewed and updated the following conservation practice standards and they have been placed in the eFOTG:

<b>Standard Number</b>	<b>Practice Name</b>	<b>Revision Date</b>	<b>Expired Version Date</b>
312	Agrichemical Handling Facility	November, 2005	<b>New</b>
313	Waste Storage Facility	November, 2005	December, 1999
317	Composting Facility	November, 2005	September, 2001
350	Sediment Basin	November, 2005	February, 1985
367	Waste Facility Cover	November, 2005	<b>New</b>
378	Pond	November, 2005	August, 1982
382	Fence	November, 2005	March, 2002
396	Fish Passage	November, 2005	<b>New</b>
397	Aquaculture Ponds*	November, 2005	March, 1985
430dd	Irrigation Water Conveyance, High Pressure, Underground Plastic Pipeline	November, 2005	February, 1985
430ee	Irrigation Water Conveyance, Low Pressure, Underground Plastic Pipeline	November, 2005	February, 1985
436	Irrigation Storage Reservoir	November, 2005	May, 1981

442	Irrigation System Sprinkler	November, 2005	May, 1981
449	Irrigation Water Management	November, 2005	February, 2000
460	Land Clearing	November, 2005	<b>New</b>
468	Lined Waterway or Outlet	November, 2005	February, 1986
500	Obstruction Removal	November, 2005	<b>New</b>
533	Pumping Plant	November, 2005	<b>New</b>
560	Access Road	November, 2005	March, 2002
561	Heavy Use Area Protection	November, 2005	January, 2001
568	Recreation Trail and Walkway	November, 2005	May, 1981
575	Animal Trails and Walkways	November, 2005	August, 1999
587	Structure for Water Control	November, 2005	May, 1981
606	Subsurface Drain	November, 2005	May, 1981
607	Surface Drainage, Field Ditch	November, 2005	May, 1981
608	Surface Drainage, Main or Lateral	November, 2005	May, 1981
634	Manure Transfer	November, 2005	January, 1998
635	Wastewater Treatment Strip	November, 2005	February, 2001
638	Water and Sediment Control Basin	November, 2005	May, 1987
655	Forest Trails and Landings	November, 2005	<b>New</b>
658	Wetland Creation	November, 2005	<b>New</b>
765 Interim	Silage Leachate Collection and Transfer	November, 2005	May, 1998

\*Connecticut/Rhode Island Practice Standard 397, Commercial Fish Ponds dated March, 1985 was renamed and revised. The new standard is 397, Aquaculture Ponds.

Also note that Interim Practice Standard 719, Milkhouse, and Milkroom Wastewater Treatment have been cancelled.

## **Section V**

The Conservation Practice Physical Effects (CPPEs) have been reformatted and updated and can be viewed online. The CPPEs document, by practice, the physical effects the practice has on a resource concern at a resource indicator level. These effects can have a positive or a negative effect on a particular resource and this worksheet is used in the environmental assessment process for planning conservation practices.

## **Economic**

Staff has completed CSP enhancement costs also the first draft of the cost effectiveness portion of the EQIP ranking tool. A draft TACCP staff hour by land use and practice was provided for review. Staff provided economic evaluation assistance on DSR team to EWP program in CT. Spreadsheets were developed for Cost benefit estimation and reviewed data with Phil Renn. Adjusted cost list via late comments from program managers. Two new practices were added to the list. Staff began adjusting the EQIP ranking tool to reflect the average cost of installing the typical practice versus per unit cost of the practice.

Addressed National Bulletin 190-6-1 regarding the number of EIS and EA we participated in the previous year. Staff drafted a state policy for adjusting the cost list and documenting costs (receipts, bids, etc.) circulated to field and admin staff for review. Staff completed the new operating costs expenditure portion of Fiscal Impact Analysis (FIA) for Woodstock Ct. Outlined

cost increases in EQIP practices from 2004 to 2006. Drafted letter to NHQ regarding including AM designated practices as part of incentive program to implement during year one or two to earn 10% or 5% of contract cost as a bonus. Staff has begun amending costs listed for CSP program FY 2006 as per memo from NHQ.

Finalized the FY 2006 cost list for posting. Final copy accepted. Submitted draft policy for establishing cost list to STC for approval. Assembled cost data for increased capital expenditures for the FIA in Woodstock, Ct. Began preparing a presentation for Ct. RC&D and town of Woodstock. Staff continues to assemble practice implementation data from Protracts to analyze implementation successes/ none. Attended meeting for RI beef growers. Staff developed list of EQIP practices for the Energy Initiative and Contract Completion Initiative. Practices had to show an increase in cost by at least 20% for NHQ to consider adding it to a list of practices they will allow for cost increases to encourage clients to implement overdue practices.

A letter was drafted for the Energy Initiative and Contract Completion Initiative stating why practices designated as AM should be included in the incentive protocol. Policy was also drafted to change the incentive structure from a dollar amount to a percentage of contract cost.

Assembled Fiscal Impact Analysis (FIA) presentation for Woodstock town officials and Ct RC&D coordinator; presented preliminary estimates through the expenditure section of the FIA to Town officials of Woodstock, Ct.

Reviewed and adjusted specific enhancement costs for the CSP FY 2006 program. Staff documented reasoning and calculation methods for presentation to National CSP Manager.

Drafted an index based on the average number of people per square mile to be used in the soil survey funding formula. The goal is to show/quantify why smaller states require more money than larger states. This activity was requested by Ct. Asst State Soil Technician, Shawn McVey.

### **Cultural Resources Updates**

Updated the CR portion of the conservation report and established first run of tracking CR review process for all RI projects. Reviewed and ranked CR proposals. Staff addressed after-the-fact problems with the solicitation between Mass. and Ct. Drafted the training Agenda for Modules 7 and 8 Cultural Resource Training for the Soil and Water Conservation Society (SNE Chapter) Workshop. Staff also reviewed PAL account/budget for FY2005. Staff continues to work on consistency of reporting/recording CR requirements for contracts.

### **Special Projects**

Staff also began training to assume role as NEPA contact. Staff attended NRCS meeting concerning EAs and NEPA. Staff worked on presentation for Staff meeting to present the EA NEPA project. Staff developed method of creating the flow diagrams. Posted NEPA diagrams for technical staff to review and incorporated comments as appropriate. Staff provided other states with copies of the drafted NEPA flow diagrams. Staff traveled to Greensboro for week long working meeting on NEPA. Staff completed modifications to EA diagrams for 10 conservation practices. Staff modified EA diagrams via comments from the meeting in Greensboro. Staff developed Practice Information sheets for the 10 conservation practices.

This latter activity is to provide information to public inquiry that might arise concerning the practice. It includes written description and visual media to convey the practice.

Solicited information from technical staff regarding associated practices used in a Resource Management System with each of the 10 conservation practices for which an EA is being drafted.

Reorganized Civil Rights related information so that information is properly displayed as applicable for to the public and personnel.

## **ENGINEERING (Reported by Frank Vogel)**

### **Watershed (06) Program:**

The Bailey Brook preliminary investigative report was completed and distributed to all interested stakeholders. The final report is available as a link on the Rhode Island NRCS website. A closeout meeting was held on Nov 18, 2005. The project will not proceed further as a watershed plan under the PL-566 program. Responsibility for implementing the report recommendations has been transferred to the towns with NRCS now providing a technical support role.

Pocasset Floodplain Management Study (FPMS):

Sensitivity Analysis was performed by EA Engineering on the HEC-RAS model. Discrepancies between the October high water mark observations and the model predictions are undergoing further investigation.

Pawcatuck Watershed Water Use Stakeholders Group/Optimization Project:

Vicky Drew and Michael Kenyon participated in the update meeting at USGS's office in Providence. Discussion on completing the project and funding that remains were topics that were discussed. The steering committee will determine what reports were going to be included within the final report.

### **Engineering Services:**

A solicitation was advertised for SF-330 submittals for Architect/Engineer firms to compete for a RI NRCS Indefinite Quantity/Indefinite Delivery (IDIQ) contract to perform engineering planning, survey, design, and construction services for projects funded through WHIP, WRP, EQIP, and other NRCS programs. Ten (10) firms responded and evaluations and selections will be complete by early February 2006.

### **GLCI - Grazing Land Conservation Initiative**

Meat processing seminar sponsored by DEM, Div. of Agriculture was held for livestock producers who may want to participate in selling local products. The year end report sent to the National GLCI Coordinator.

## **FARM BILL PROGRAMS (Reported by Vicky Drew and Joe Bachand)**

### **Conservation Security Program (CSP)**

During the first quarter of 2006 fiscal year, NRCS staff developed a draft 2006 CSP Enhancement and Cost List. We participated in semi-weekly national net meetings on CSP and a weeklong training in St. Louis. Staff coordinated efforts to complete all outreach activities for CSP 2006, including press release, directed mailing to watershed landowners, and CSP workshop. Training was developed and conducted for all field staff on changes to CSP in anticipation of 2006 sign-up.

### **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)**

Program staff reviewed and finalized 2006 Cost List. Key staff and subcommittee of State Tech Team, developed draft 2006 EQIP policies for staff and State Tech Team review. A final version of the EQIP policy is complete following a review period. The policy was distributed and posted on the web. Staff worked on development of RI EQIP Ranking Tool for FY 2007. Staff prepared for and delivered training to all field staff on Conservation Program Contracting.

### **Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP)**

NRCS received 1.8 million dollars for the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program for FY2006. NRCS will continue to take applications for FY 2006 until February 10, 2006. All application materials are on the RI NRCS website. The application announcement and materials was sent to numerous list serves in Rhode Island including the Habitat Restoration List Serve and the Land Trust list serve. Several workshops were held to promote all farm bill programs. One was for land trust and conservation commissions and was at the Save the Bay headquarters in Providence. A second workshop was held at the USDA office in Warwick. Attendance for both workshops was very good and we will receive application from individuals and groups who attended. As of February 3, we received 16 applications. The field staff has scheduled field visits with potential WHIP applicants.

### **Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)**

NRCS staff worked with closing agent and Office of General Counsel to prepare for closing second GRP easement. An easement of 31-acres of the Gorham Farm in Foster was obtained through GRP. Met with 2005 GRP applicant to discuss deed restrictions and overall objectives for farm. Staff participated in GRP teleconferences on revised appraisal policies. Discussed and distributed draft appraisal guidelines to appraisers, as requested. Staff continues efforts to secure easement on one 2005 GRP application. Revised Option to Purchase Agreements based on acreage changes. Solicited updated appraisal based on acreage changes. Staff is also coordinating activities with landowner and Land Trust.

### **Farm and Ranch land Protection Program (FRPP)**

NRCS staff worked with RI Agricultural Land Preservation Commission to close on Knight Farm in Scituate.

## OUTREACH/COMMUNICATIONS (Reported by Jeanne Comford)

NRCS RI during this time frame completed the following outreach event:

Jim Turene completed educational soils, Ground Penetrating Radar, and Electro-magnetic Induction demonstration for the URI's Geology Department. Also Jim completed hydric soils and wetland delineation presentation for URI Wetland Ecology class. Jim made a presentation of Soil survey and mapping class for URI Soil Morphology and Mapping class.

Outreach events -	Attendees
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▪ NRICD farm tour	15
▪ NRICD workshop	20
▪ ERICD Farm tour	13
▪ ERICD annual meeting	45
▪ State Tech committee farm tour	16
▪ Career day at Shea High School,	70
▪ Farm Forum	75
▪ RI Beef processing meeting	30

Over 15 Press Releases were written and submitted to many different local papers. These articles included information on programs deadline and success stories.

## OPERATIONS (Reported by Jackie Pasnick)

### Personnel Actions

Roylene Rides at the Door was selected as State Conservationist for Rhode Island effective 8/21/05. Christopher Modisette was selected as the new RC&D Coordinator effective 10/17/05. Peter Bonome was voluntarily reassigned from District Conservationist for the Eastern Rhode Island Conservation District to Soil Conservationist effective 12/25/05. Peter Bonome is on leave 12/25/05 through 4/1/05. Mike Kenyon will serve as Acting District Conservationist for the Eastern Rhode Island Conservation District effective 12/25/05. Jan Lathum accepted the position of Budget Analyst, vacating her position as Program Managers Assistant, effective 8/21/05.

### Performance goals

Every year each State commits to Performance goals that justify the budget each state receives. Initial 2006 performance goals were submitted to the regional office for review on 12/21/05. Every NRCS employee in RI is held accountable to obtain the Performance goals. Current status of NRCS RI performance goals is as follows:

Performance Summary Status through December 29, 2005	Goal	Total Progress	Progress Percent
CNMP Applied (No.)	10		
CNMP Written (No.)	9	1	11
Conservation Plans for Cropland Written (Ac.)	1,000	1	0



Conservation Plans for Grazing Land Written (Ac.)	400	3	1
Farmland and Grazing Land Protected by Conservation Easements (Ac.)	158		
Grazing land with Conservation Applied to Protect the Resource Base (Ac.)	185	133	72
Irrigation Efficiency Improved (Ac-Ft)	15	6	38
Local Businesses Created in Rural Communities through RC&D Assistance (No.)	4		
Local Jobs Created in Rural Communities through RC&D Assistance (No.)	8		
Non-federal Land Managed for the Protection and Enhancement of Habitat for Species with Declining Populations (Ac.)	7,430	462	6
Non-federal Land Treated for Fish and Wildlife Habitat (Ac.)	535	234	44
Prime, Unique, and Important Farmland Protected by Conservation Easements from Conversion to Non-Agricultural Uses (Ac.)	89		
Reduction in the Acreage of Cropland Soils Damaged by Erosion (Ac.)	100		
Soil Erosion Reduced (Tons)	310	9	3
Soil Surveys Mapped or Updated (Ac.)	1,000		
Watershed or Area-Wide Conservation Plans Developed for Water or Air Quality (Ac.)	79,000		
Watershed or Area-Wide Conservation Plans Developed for Water or Air Quality (No.)	9		
Watershed or Area-Wide Resource Plans, Studies or Inventories for Flood Prevention or Mitigation (No.)	3		
Watershed or Area-Wide Resource Plans, Studies or Inventories for Water Conservation and Water Supply (No.)	1		
Wetlands Created, Restored or Enhanced (Ac.)	130	25	19
Wetlands Protected by 30-year or Permanent Easements (Ac.)	29		

## Training, Conferences, and Meetings

Employees attended the following Training, Conferences, and meetings:

- New State Conservationist Orientation-Rides at the Door,
- CSP 2005 Program Review and 2006 Implementation-Merrill, Kenyon, Drew
- RUSLE-Pindell, Boettger

- PhotoShop,-Comerford
- Integrated Restoration of Riverine Wetlands, Streams, Riparian Areas and Floodplains, in Watershed Contexts,-Merrill, Richard
- Technical Seminar on Dam Failure Analysis,-Schmidt
- Integrated Pest Management,-Drew
- New England Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference,-Drew
- Introduction to NRCS,-Boettger, Giorgi, Lathum, and Shaw
- AISES 2005 Annual National Conference,-Rides at the Door
- New England RC&D Association Annual Meeting, -Modisette
- Job and Business Growth in Rural America: Entrepreneurial Development Forum,-Modisette
- ONE training-Reena Shaw

## **RC&D (Reported by Chris Modisette)**

### **RC&D Open House**

The RI RC&D Open House was held on January 12, 2006. Approximately 60 individuals from a variety of agencies have been invited and 25 attended. Three (3) of these individuals have expressed interest in participating on the RC&D Council.

### **Rhode Island Surplus Wool Project**

Rhode Island sheep farmers are having difficulty selling their wool. The decline of wool textile mills in New England and low wool prices have turned much raw wool into a nuisance rather than a product. The Rhode Island Resource Conservation & Development Council (RI RC&D) is investigating options for these farmers for the local utilization of their raw material. Similar projects in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Oregon can serve as an example of a successful approach to this issue.

A meeting to promote the project to Rhode Island sheep farmers was held on January 18, 2006 at the Laurel Grange, Harmony, RI. The RI Division of Agriculture co-sponsored the meeting. Approximately 20 sheep farmers attended the meeting. A steering committee to move the project forward has been formed and will start meeting in February 2006.

RC&D sees an opportunity to create a beautiful blanket that can bring more income to farmers while at the same time promoting the sustainability of local agriculture and agricultural products.

Current Partners include: RIDEM – Division of Agriculture, USDA-NRCS, RI RC&D Council, and the RI Sheep Cooperative.

### **Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP)**

RI RC&D assists the RIDEM – Division of Forest Environment (RIDFE) with the implementation of the Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP) by administering cost-share payments to eligible forest landowners for completed FLEP practices as approved by RIDFE.

The purpose of the FLEP is to provide a coordinated and cooperative Federal, State, and local sustainable forestry program for the establishment, maintenance, enhancement, and restoration of forests on non-industrial private forest land.

In November 2005 five (5) landowners owning a total of 167 acres received \$2,142 of cost-share assistance for the preparation of forest stewardship plans. To date the program has enrolled 3,452 acres of forestland involving 45 forest landowners who received \$23,037 of cost-share assistance.

### **Forest Legacy Program**

RI RC&D is represented on the Rhode Island Forest Stewardship Committee which, in part, implements the **Forest Legacy Program** in Rhode Island. The Forest Legacy Program provides grants to the State of Rhode Island through the USDA Forest Service, to acquire land or interests in land from willing sellers. The fair market value of interests acquired is determined by standardized federal appraisal methods. Acquisitions are based on the concept of "willing seller, willing buyer." There is no condemnation of land involved. Recently, development rights to two (2) forested parcels were acquired through this program. They include:

- The Kevin Breene Forest Legacy Parcel (150 acres) – West Greenwich; and
- The Yawgoo Pond Forest Legacy Parcel (74 acres) – South Kingstown.

These two (2) new projects bring the total of forestland protected under this program to 1,682 acres. If you are interested in more information about this program, please contact: [Paul Ricard](#), Rhode Island Forest Legacy Program Coordinator at (401) 647-3367.

### **Wood-Pawcatuck Stream Continuity Project**

In August 2005 the RI RC&D approved a project that is aimed at reducing impediments to movement of brook trout in the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed area. This is a project in partnership with the Wood Pawcatuck Watershed Association (WPWA), Narragansett Chapter of Trout Unlimited (TU), and USDA-NRCS. Using information, assessment approaches, and standards already developed through a similar project in MA, Trout Unlimited (TU) and the Wood Pawcatuck Watershed Association (WPWA) volunteers have begun to survey the bridges and culverts in the Upper Wood River. They are testing the volunteer assessment forms and are locating potential restoration projects. We hope to establish a protocol and expand with more partners to assess the rest of the state.

There is great potential for re-connecting many miles of river and stream corridors in RI that would not only benefit the migratory fish species (e.g. salmon, river herring, shad, etc.), but also resident freshwater fish and wildlife populations (e.g. trout and freshwater mussels, crayfish, etc.).

### **100 Gifts from Rhode Island's Forests**

April 6, 2006 is the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the formation of the State of Rhode Island's forestry program. In recognition of this landmark, RC&D has proposed an event that celebrates this milestone by obtaining 100 Gifts from Rhode Island's forests. These gifts would then be offered at auction with portions of the proceeds going to the original artists and the balance to an organization(s) with a history of promoting forest conservation in the state.

## **Rural Fire Protection Program**

RI RC&D is providing assistance for the development of dry hydrants in communities that do not have pressurized water available when and where fire protection is needed. A dry hydrant is a non-pressurized, low-cost pipe system installed and connected to a source of water, usually a pond. Many rural towns do not have strategically placed pressurized fire hydrants in their communities and must rely on farm ponds, small streams, and even swimming pools to provide water in the event of a fire.

## **Dry Hydrant Program**

Little Compton, western Coventry, West Greenwich, and Block Island are currently in partnership with RI RC&D for assistance to place dry hydrants in their communities. Additional inquiries have been received from the towns of North Scituate and Gloucester.

## **Dry Hydrant Application Guidance Manual**

RI RC&D in concert with USDA-NRCS, RIDEM – Divisions of Forest Environment and Freshwater Wetlands is in the process of developing a comprehensive dry hydrant procedural kit. The RIDFE has agreed to provide materials for the manual and print 200 copies. With RIDFE's assistance we anticipate distributing the manual to approximately 60 rural fire departments. Additionally, we plan to work with the RI Association of Conservation Districts and RIDFE to introduce the manual to rural communities at a series of meetings beginning in early spring 2006.

## **2006 Forestry & Wood Expo**

RI RC&D is partnering with the Rhode Island Forest Conservator's Organization, RIDEM-Division of Forest Environment, RI Rural Development center, Southern New England Forest Consortium, Inc. and the RI Tree Farm Committee to sponsor the 2006 Forestry & Wood Expo. The expo will provide a series of seminars, workshops, as well as business luncheon to highlight the contribution of the forestry and wood products to Rhode Island's economy. The expo will also serve as the kick-off event to the celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of forestry in Rhode Island.

## **Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Manual**

The Rhode Island Soil Erosion & Sediment Control Manual has not been updated since 1989. RI RC&D is discussing the opportunity to provide technical services to RIDEM to update this manual.

## **Forestry Special Projects Technical Assistance to the Narragansett Indian Tribe – Restoration of Black Ash, American Chestnut and Walnut Species**

The Narragansett Indian Tribe is interested in the re-establishment of certain tree species that are highly valued in tribal culture. The decline of these tree species is of concern to the tribe. USDA-NRCS through RI RC&D is interested in providing technical assistance to the tribe on options available to the tribe for the restoration of these species on tribal lands. Ultimately, we hope to develop a restoration plan that will lead to a plan of work and related forest conservation practices for regeneration of these species.

RI RC&D Coordinator Chris Modisette, working with the Tribe's consulting forester, participated at the September 12-14, 2005, 2005 Native American Fish & Wildlife Society's Northeast Regional Conference hosted by the Narragansett Indian Tribe. As part of this participation, Mr. Modisette developed materials for a panel presentation on this topic as well as recommendations on for "next steps" in this process.

State Conservationist Roylene Rides at the Door has met with representative of the Narragansett Indian Tribe to explain how NRCS can provide technical and financial assistance to the Tribe on a variety of conservation projects, one of which is the re-establishment of certain tree species that are highly valued in tribal culture.

### **Composting Brochure - URI Cooperative Extension - Livestock Manure on Small Acreages**

URI Cooperative Extension is proposing a project that addresses the proper storage, handling, and disposal of livestock manure on small acreages. This project will add to and compliment the work that RC&D will be doing on horse manure composting with RIDEM – Division of Agriculture, RI Resource Recovery Corporation, and the RI Rural Development Council.

### **SOILS (Reported by Jim Terrene)**

#### **Map Coast**

The Map Coast Partnership in Rhode Island began during the winter/spring of 2004 when the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) approached the University of Rhode Island (Coastal Institute) about establishing the institutional framework to map, inventory, describe, and classify coastal soils and sediment in Rhode Island. NRCS's goal is to establish a Center of Excellence in sub-aqueous soils located in the Ocean State.

The Map Coast partnership has been very successful in bringing together groups and individuals who recognize the importance and need to collect more detailed soil and sediment data for coastal marshes, dunes, inter-tidal flats, and shallow water habitats. Map Coast partners recognize that map data and attributes for coastal and shallow water soils (sub-aqueous soils) and sediment are essential for management and protection of these vital coastal ecosystems.

NRCS's participation in this Partnership has been very important and the support of other local, state, and federal agencies has been growing, to date there are 15 groups and organizations who have signed the MOU for Map Coast.

During the first quarter of 2005 a team of scientists focused work on Ninigret Pond, Greenwich Bay, and Wickford Harbor. Data collected during this time included; detailed bathymetry mapping, side-scan sonar and multi beam (acoustic mapping), soil survey and geologic mapping, soil coring, laboratory analysis, and benthic habitat mapping. The field work culminated in late October when local news channel 10 filmed a feature piece for their Watershed Watch segment about Map Coast and featured the segment on the 6 O'clock news.

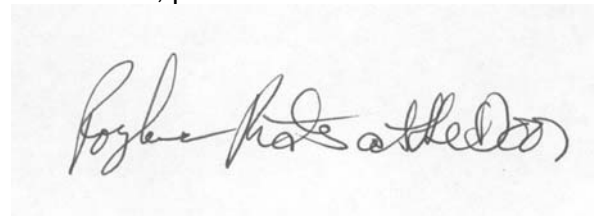
## **Soil Resource Assistance**

The soil program is responsible for providing technical assistance to the NRCS farm planners, conservation district, and cooperators. Examples of assistance provided by the soil staff includes wetland (hydric soil) delineation, determining soil suitability for engineering designs, providing ratings of soils for agricultural importance for the Farm and Ranchland Preservation Program, and providing educational outreach.

## **Cooperative Soil Survey Updates**

The National Cooperative Soil Survey is undergoing reorganization which will utilize the Major Land Resource Area (MLRA) approach to better organize the soil data based on areas of similar soil, vegetation, geology, and land-uses rather than the traditional method of each State being responsible for the soil survey. It is hoped that utilizing this MLRA approach that soil data will be collected more efficiently, the maps will have perfect joins along State boundaries, and the soil scientists will have a long term location rather than having to move each time a survey is completed. A meeting of the MO-12 (Northeastern States) Board of Directors was held in December with the goal of deciding on the locations of the MLRA office within the region. Eleven MLRA offices were agreed to be established throughout the region. The office which will be responsible for the terrestrial areas of Rhode Island will be located in Windsor Connecticut. This office will be responsible for approximately 12.5 million acres in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Connecticut, and New York. A special project office for coastal and sub-aqueous soils was selected to be established in Rhode Island.

This is the activities report for NRCS Rhode Island. If you have any questions or need further information, please let me know.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Roylene Rides at the Door", is written on a light-colored, slightly textured background.

ROYLENE RIDES AT THE DOOR  
State Conservationist